

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. BIDEN:

S. Res. 192. A resolution expressing the sense of the Senate that institutions of higher education should carry out activities to change the culture of alcohol consumption on college campuses; to the Committee on Labor and Human Resources.

By Ms. MOSELEY-BRAUN:

S. Con. Res. 80. A concurrent resolution urging that the railroad industry, including rail labor, management and retiree organization, open discussions for adequately funding an amendment to the Railroad Retirement Act of 1974 to modify the guaranteed minimum benefit for widows and widowers whose annuities are converted from a spouse to a widow or widower annuity; to the Committee on Labor and Human Resources.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mrs. HUTCHISON (for herself, Mr. GRAMS, and Mr. ASHCROFT):

S. 1711. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to eliminate the marriage penalty tax, to increase the income levels for the 15 and 28 percent tax brackets, to provide a 1-year holding period for long-term capital gains, to index capital assets for inflation, to reduce the highest estate tax rate to 28 percent, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

THE TAX RELIEF AND DEBT REDUCTION ACT OF 1998

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, today Senator ROD GRAMS and I are introducing the half-and-half bill. We like to say half-and-half is more than just rich milk. We want to have the plan in place so if we, in fact, have a surplus, we will start doing the responsible thing for the people of our country. We believe half should go to debt reduction, to start paying down the \$5 trillion debt, and half should go to tax relief for the hard-working American family.

The Federal tax burden today is the greatest that it has been in the history of our country. In fact, 38.3 percent of the average family income is spent on taxes. That is a whale of a burden on people who are trying to raise children, trying to put them through college, and we are very pleased to try to bring down that tax burden with the half-and-half Tax Relief and Debt Reduction Act of 1998.

This is what our bill does. First, it eliminates the marriage tax penalty by allowing couples to file as singles. Mr. President, 21 million American couples today pay an average of \$1,400 more because they got married. You see behind me an example, and this is a real example. A first-year schoolteacher in Houston is paid \$27,000. A rookie police officer in Houston, TX starts out at \$29,698. After they get married, their tax burden will be \$638.44 more, just because they got married. We do not think that is right. We do not believe

that Americans should have to choose between love and money. We want an equitable and fair burden on the taxpayers of this country, and we do not think that people who get married, who are both working, should have to pay more taxes.

The second thing our bill does is raise the income levels for the 15 and 28 percent tax brackets. For a single person, before he or she would move into the 28 percent bracket, it would go up to \$35,000; a married couple, \$50,000, and for a head of household it would be \$40,000. The 28 percent bracket would be expanded for a single person to \$71,050; a married couple at \$109,950, and head of household \$93,750.

It is very important that we start giving that relief at these lower income and middle income levels, and that is what this bill will do.

The bill also repeals the 18-month capital gains holding period and makes it 12 months instead. It is a fact that our elderly people pay the most in capital gains taxes, and we think that is wrong. So we are going to try to reduce the holding period so our elderly people who may have to sell assets to live on will not be burdened any more than is absolutely necessary.

We index capital gains taxes for inflation in our bill. Taxpayers should not have to pay a capital gains tax in assets that have increased in value simply due to inflation. Last year we started this process of by allowing an exemption of \$500,000 in capital gains for the sale of a home. That's a big help to an elderly person. We want to make it even easier for them.

We would cut the top estate tax rate from 55 percent to 28 percent. We believe estate taxes take away from the ability of Americans to realize the American dream of giving their children a better start.

So we are trying to bring down the tax burden on the hard-working American family. We believe it is important that people be able to keep more of the money they earn, and 38 percent of the average American's pay, salary, going to taxes, is too much of a burden. So I am very pleased Senator GRAMS has come on as the major cosponsor of this bill.

Mr. GRAMS: Mr. President, I rise today to join Senator HUTCHISON in introducing legislation to lockbox any budget surplus for tax relief and national debt reduction. Given this week's budget surplus projections, the "Tax Relief and Debt Reduction Act of 1998" is the right legislation at the right time.

Eighty-five years ago this week, the Internal Revenue Service began collecting the individual income tax, initiating 85 years of ever-increasing hardship for America's taxpaying families. Now, with a budget surplus closer and taxes at an all-time high, it is time that Washington let the taxpayers keep more of their own money, so that families can spend it meeting their own needs—whether that is child care,

health insurance, clothing, or groceries. By dedicating half of any budget surplus to reducing the debt and the other half to family tax relief, Senator HUTCHISON's legislation protects the taxpayers of today while reducing the burden on the taxpayers of tomorrow. I commend her for her leadership on this timely issue.

Mr. President, I would like to offer some perspective into why we are introducing the "Tax Relief and Debt Reduction Act" today.

If it seems as though the media has a label for everyone these days, blame it on the era of the 15-second sound bite. At a point in history when many in the media consider brevity the most virtuous of virtues, journalists compete for our attention by whittling down their words into a kind of reporter's shorthand that, over time, becomes meaningless to news consumers.

The shorthand gets especially muddled when it is applied to politics. Once a person enters public office, the media is quick to toss them a label—conservative or liberal, left wing or right wing. As political realities evolve, though, the labels have less and less relevance as time goes on. They become a cliché, no longer very useful in describing a political philosophy.

I believe the American public has already moved beyond the media in breaking from the label mentality, and whether they consider it consciously, they have shifted their thinking from the old concept of liberal versus conservative to that of taxpayers versus big Government. Today, every action of the government is being evaluated by a standard that strikes home for the folks who work for a living, raise a family, and pay their taxes: does it benefit the taxpayers or does it benefit the Government?

What we have discovered through this new way of thinking is that far too often, the Government is prospering at the expense of the taxpayers. Too much faith in Government equals less freedom for families and individuals. Dependency on Government equals less independence for the governed. And as the Government prospers, we have learned that big Government does not necessarily translate into better Government—it is just bigger Government, with more bureaucracy, paid for by higher taxes.

Families today are taxed at the highest levels since World War II, with 38 percent of a typical family's budget going to pay taxes on the Federal, State, and local level. In nominal dollars, a two-income family is paying more just in taxes today than their paychecks totaled in 1977. That is nearly 50% more than they are spending for food, shelter, and clothing combined.

Taxpayers do not mind paying taxes when they can see results. In local government, the results are obvious: clean streets, police cars on patrol, regular garbage pickup. On the Federal level, the results are much less evident. Families want to believe Washington is